

Claims

1. A method for controlling channel changes in television or digital radio having a tuner or receiver,
5 the method involving monitoring channel change commands received from a user over a zapping session during which channels are discarded; identifying discarded channels; and preventing the tuner or receiver from returning to the discarded channels during the rest of
10 the zapping session or unless it is determined that a programme transmitted on the discarded channel has changed.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the step of
15 identifying discarded channels involves monitoring a time for which the viewer viewed the channel and on the basis of this, determining whether the channel is discarded.
- 20 3. A method as claimed in claim 2, comprising setting a viewing time threshold for use in the step of determining whether the channel is to be discarded.
- 25 4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.
- 30 5. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

6. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.

5 7. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the set viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

8. A method as claimed in any one of claims 3 to claim
10 7 comprising receiving a user input indicative of the times set.

9. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the step of identifying discarded
15 channels involves receiving from a user an indication of a programme or item type that is to be discarded; monitoring the type of programme currently being provided on available channels and discarding those channels that are currently broadcasting programmes or
20 items of the type indicated by the user.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the programme type is sports programmes and/or current affairs programmes and/or advertisements.

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11. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims comprising determining whether a programme on a particular channel has changed.

30 12. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the step of determining whether a programme has changed comprises

comparing programme identifiers for the previously viewed channel and the programme currently available.

13. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding
5 claims, wherein the step of determining whether a programme on a particular channel has changed involves monitoring real time; identifying programme scheduling information for a particular channel and using the scheduling information and real time to determine
10 whether there is a change in the currently broadcast programme.

14. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims involving receiving a control signal from the
15 user that indicates that a channel zapping session is starting, this signal prompting the start of the step of monitoring the channels zapped to and those discarded.

20 15. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the method involves receiving from a user a signal that is indicative of a command to stop the channel zapping session.

25 16. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims comprising terminating the channel zapping session if no channel change commands are received over a pre-determined time.

30 17. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims comprising identifying an advertisement, temporarily excluding the channel that the advertisement is being shown on from the pool of

available channels and re-introducing the channel when the advertisement is finished.

18. A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 17
5 comprising identifying an advertisement and showing material, such as a video clip or text, which is associated with the programme that is to be shown when the advertisement is finished.

10 19. A method as claimed in claim 15 further involving recording a portion of the programme shown immediately preceding the advertisement and displaying this to the user during the advertisement.

15 20. A method as claimed in claim 19 comprising carrying out the step of recording for all available channels.

21. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims comprising monitoring programme changes;
20 identifying the most recently provided or broadcast programme and presenting the most recently provided or broadcast programme to the user in response to a channel change command.

25 22. A system for controlling channel changes in television or digital radio having a tuner or receiver, the system comprising means for monitoring channel change commands received from a user over a zapping session during which channels are discarded; means for
30 identifying discarded channels; and means for preventing the tuner or receiver from tuning to the discarded channels during the rest of the zapping

session or unless it is determined that a programme transmitted on the discarded channel has changed.

23. A system as claimed in claim 22, wherein the means
5 for identifying discarded channels comprise means for monitoring a time for which the viewer viewed the channel and on the basis of this, determining whether the channel is discarded.

10 24. A system as claimed in claim 23, comprising means for setting a viewing time threshold for use by the means for determining whether the channel is to be discarded.

15 25. A system as claimed in claim 24, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.

20 26. A system as claimed in claim 24, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

25 27. A system as claimed in claim 24, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the set viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.

28. A system as claimed in claim 24, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the set viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

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29. A system as claimed in any one of claims 23 to claim 28 comprising means for receiving a user input indicative of the times set.
- 5 30. A system as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 29, wherein the means for identifying discarded channels are operable to receive from a user an indication of a programme or item type that is to be discarded; monitor the type of programme currently being provided on
10 available channels and discard those channels that are currently broadcasting programmes or items of the type indicated by the user.
- 15 31. A system as claimed in claim 29, wherein the programme type is sports programmes and/or current affairs programmes and/or advertisements.
- 20 32. A system as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 31 comprising means for determining whether a programme on a particular channel has changed.
- 25 33. A system as claimed in claim 32, wherein the means for determining whether a programme has changed comprise means for comparing programme identifiers for the previously viewed channel and the programme currently available.
- 30 34. A system as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 33, wherein the means for determining whether a programme on a particular channel has changed are operable to monitor real time; identify programme scheduling information for a particular channel and use the scheduling information and real time to determine

whether there is a change in the ,currently broadcast programme.

35. A system as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 34
5 comprising means for receiving a control signal from the user indicative of the start of a channel zapping session, means for recognising the signal as a zapping session identifier and activating the means for monitoring the channels zapped to and those discarded
10 in response to the zapping command.

36. A system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 28,
comprising means for receiving from a user a signal that is indicative of a command to stop the channel
15 zapping session.

37. A system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 29
comprising means for terminating the channel zapping session if no channel change commands are received over
20 a pre-determined time.

38. A system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 30
comprising a display for showing the programmes on.

25 39. A system as claimed in any one of claims 18 to 31 being adapted to receive channel change commands from a remote control.

40. A computer program, preferably on a data carrier or
30 some other computer readable medium, for controlling channel changes in a television or digital radio having a tuner or receiver, the computer programme having code

or instructions for monitoring channel change commands received from a user over a zapping session during which channels are discarded; identifying discarded channels; and preventing the tuner or receiver from
5 tuning to the discarded channels during the rest of the zapping session or unless it is determined that a programme transmitted on the discarded channel has changed.

10 41. A computer program as claimed in claim 40, wherein the code or instructions for determining discarded channels are operable to monitor a time for which the viewer viewed the channel and on the basis of this, determine whether the channel is discarded.

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42. A computer program as claimed in claim 41, comprising code or instructions for setting a viewing time threshold for use by the means for determining whether the channel is to be discarded.

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43. A computer program as claimed in claim 42, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.

25 44. A computer program as claimed in claim 42, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at most the viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

30 45. A computer program as claimed in claim 42, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the set viewing time threshold, then the channel is discarded.

46. A computer program as claimed in claim 42, wherein if the monitored viewing time is at least the set viewing time threshold, then the channel is retained.

5 47. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 46 comprising code or instructions for receiving a user input indicative of the times set.

10 48. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 48, wherein the code or instructions for identifying discarded channels are operable to receive from a user an indication of a programme or item type that is to be discarded; monitor the type of programme currently being provided on available channels and
15 discard those channels that are currently broadcasting programmes or items of the type indicated by the user.

20 49. A computer program as claimed in claim 48, wherein the programme type is sports programmes and/or current affairs programmes and/or advertisements.

50. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 49 comprising code or instructions for determining whether a programme on a particular channel has
25 changed.

51. A computer program as claimed in claim 50, wherein the code or instructions for determining whether a program has changed are operable to compare program
30 identifiers for the previously viewed program and the program currently available.

52. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 51, wherein the code or instructions for identifying whether a programme on a particular channel has changed are operable to monitor real time; identify
5 programme scheduling information for a particular channel and using the scheduling information and real time to determine whether there is a change in the currently broadcast programme.

10 53. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 51 comprising code or instructions for receiving a control signal from the user that indicates that a channel zapping session is starting, this signal prompting the start of the step of monitoring the
15 channels zapped to and those discarded.

54. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 53, wherein the code or instructions are operable to receive from a user a signal that is indicative of a
20 command to stop the channel zapping session.

55. A computer program as claimed in any one of claims 40 to 54 comprising code or instructions for terminating the channel zapping session if no channel
25 change commands are received over a pre-determined time.

56. A set top box that includes a system or computer program as defined in the preceding claims.

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57. A television system that includes a system or computer program as defined in the preceding claims.

58. A digital radio that includes a system or computer program as defined in the preceding claims.

5 59. A method substantially as described hereinbefore with reference to the accompanying drawings.

60. A system substantially as described hereinbefore with reference to the accompanying drawings and as
10 shown in Figure 1.

61. A computer program substantially as described hereinbefore with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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